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SUBJECT: GOMA: ONE DEAD, EIGHT INJURED, 20 RAPED IN ATTEMPTED PRISON
BREAK

¶1. (SBU) Summary: A group of inmates at Goma's Munzenze prison killed one police officer and injured eight others in an attempted prison break on June 21. Rioting prisoners also raped approximately 20 female inmates. National police (PNC) surrounded the prison after inmates dug escape tunnels through the prison walls. The PNC reports that no prisoners escaped. MONUC Human Rights officers investigated the site June 22 and are offering medical assistance to the victims. MONUC will accelerate a planned increase in Goma security measures ahead of the June 30 Independence Day ceremony. The escape attempt underlines the weak control over the incarceration system in the DRC and the difficulty in integrating former armed groups into the national army and police. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) According to MONUC and PNC sources, at approximately 1030 pm on Sunday June 21 a group of prisoners punched a hole in the wall of Goma's Munzenze prison and tried to escape. Prison guards and the PNC unit deployed on the perimeter of the prison saw the activity and opened fire on the inmates. A special 'mobile police unit' which had recently arrived from Kinshasa, joined the local PNC units.

¶3. (SBU) Approximately ten of the escapees were armed with a single pistol and ten grenades. During the exchange of fire, the prisoners threw 2 grenades, killing a police major and injuring 8 other policemen (Comment: the PNC Major who was killed was the commanding officer of the 'mobile unit' and had just completed intensive training with European Union Police units (EUPOL). End comment) The police and guards regained control and no prisoners escaped.

¶4. (U) MONUC reports that during the attempted break out, some number of male prisoners broke into the female quarters and raped over 20 women; UNICEF-Goma reports that 21 women and 2 girls were raped. MONUC Human Rights investigated at the prison June 22 and MONUC is also coordinating medical assistance.

¶5. (SBU) MOUNC Force Command and two other independent sources tell us the escape attempt was led by two former CNDP (National Congress for the Defense of the People) and the rest were common prisoners. A CNDP contact claims no CNDP were involved and in fact that the leader was a Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) lieutenant colonel. MONUC reports the weapons were smuggled in by the prisoners' wives. A PNC contact told us he suspects prison guards - and possibly PNC - were involved, either in helping the wives or by directly bringing in the weapons.

¶6. (SBU) MONUC had been preparing to increase security in Goma ahead of the June 30 Independence Day celebrations and the arrival of VIP's as well as possibly 5,000 FARDC and PNC to protect them (including Presidential Guards from Kinshasa and newly 'integrated' brigades from the Kivus). The Munzenze prison incident has prompted MONUC to accelerate their plans; from June 22 through 10 July they will conduct heavy patrols in Goma at all hours in armored personnel carriers. MONUC personnel have also been given a temporary

2100-0500 curfew.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: The June 21 incident is the latest in a string of attempted prison breaks in Goma, Bunia and elsewhere in eastern DRC in the past few months. All observers contacted about the incident agree that the DRC prison system is weak and porous. This escape attempt was the largest in Goma for some time, and elicited a more serious response from the authorities than previous attempts. Regardless of who led the escape, it is important to note that - as with most of the other recent attempts - it was likely led by someone affiliated to one of the armed groups. This means it may have involved collaboration with members of the authorities - particularly the national army (FARDC) or national police (PNC) - affiliated (or previously affiliated) with the same armed group. In addition to underlining the need for justice system reform, incidents like the present reinforce the need to complete armed group integration as well as security sector reform to improve the effectiveness and integrity of the security services. End Comment.